

Oregon officials opt to close campground, save aging trees

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

TILLAMOOK COUNTY, Ore. -- The small, primitive campground at Oswald West State Park on the north Oregon coast was closed in June 2008. The closure was announced after a large, mature spruce tree fell around midnight in the middle of the campground. Even though the campground was full, no one was injured. The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department closed the campground. Slightly more than 15,000 people a year normally camp in the 30-site campground. The main trails and the beach accesses, visited by nearly a million people every year, were never closed, and remained open year-round. Oswald West State Park, north Oregon coast

OPRD photo Over the winter, park managers and natural resource specialists studied the campground area and found another 49 trees that could fall into a campsite, building or high-use trail. Some are small -- five to six feet around -- but several are more than 20 feet in circumference and could be 300-years old or more. Department staff considered three options: 1) Leave the trees in place and open the campground. 2) Cut down the hazardous trees and reopen the campground. 3) Leave nearly all the trees in place, keep the campground closed, and re-open the area to day hikes only. A 1986 plan for state parks in Tillamook County states Oswald West should be kept as natural as possible. Parks like Nehalem Bay State Park, five miles south, are better suited for campground development. Cutting down a large number of trees in such a small area as the Oswald West campground would change the natural character of the park; other trees in and around the campground area could also be weakened as a result, and eventually need to be cut down. To protect the park for nearly a million visitors who walk its trails, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department prefers Option 3: leave nearly all the trees in place, and keep the campground closed

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